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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the ways of speaking characteristic of a given speech-community cannot be satisfactorily described or explained in purely behavioral terms, that they constitute a behavioral manifestation of a tacit system of cultural rules or scripts, and that to understand a society's ways of speaking, it is necessary to identify and articulate its implicit cultural scripts. Furthermore, that to be able to do this without ethnocentric bias a universal, language-independent perspective is needed, and that this can be attained if the rules in question are stated in terms of lexical universals (i.e., universal human concepts lexicalized in all languages). To illustrate these propositions, ways in which these cultural scripts can be stated and justified are presented, using Japanese, (White) Anglo-American, and Black American cultural norms. The cultural scripts advanced here are formulated in a highly constrained "natural semantic metalanguage" based on a small set of lexical universals and a small set of universal syntactic patterns. It is proposed that this metalanguage allows portrayal and comparison of culture-specific attitudes, assumptions, and norms from a neutral, culture-independent perspective in terms of simple formulae that are intuitively self-explanatory while also rigorous and empirically verifiable. (Author/MSE)

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"CULTURAL SCRIPTS": A SEMANTIC APPROACH TO CULTURAL ANALYSIS AND CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

ED 398 737

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that the ways of speaking characteristic of a given speech-community cannot be satisfactorily described (let alone explained) in purely behavioral terms; that they constitute a behavioral manifestation of a tacit system of "cultural rules" or "cultural scripts"; and that to understand a society's ways of speaking, we have to identify and articulate its implicit "cultural scripts". Furthermore, it is argued that to be able to do this without ethnocentric bias we need a universal, language-independent perspective; and that this can be attained if the "rules" in question are stated in terms of lexical universals, that is, universal human concepts lexicalized in all languages of the world.

To illustrate these general propositions, the author shows how cultural scripts can be stated and how they can be justified; this is done with particular reference to Japanese, (White) Anglo-American, and Black American cultural norms.

The cultural scripts advanced in this paper are formulated in a highly constrained "natural semantic metalanguage", based on a small set of lexical universals (or near-universals) and a small set of universal (or near-universal) syntactic patterns. It is argued that the use of this metalanguage allows us to portray and compare culture-specific attitudes, assumptions, and norms from a neutral, culture-independent point of view, and to do so in terms of simple formulae which are intuitively self-explanatory while at the same time being rigorous and empirically verifiable.

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> We must begin unpacking culture in a more differentiated, theory-driven way than hitherto. (Bond, 1992, p. 11)

> There are a lot of messages implicit in social discourse: messages about what to presuppose, what to value, what to feel, how to classify (Shweder 1984, p. 56)

INTRODUCTION

Referring to the progress achieved in cross-cultural understanding in recent decades (especially with respect to Japan and America) Edward Hall writes that

> ... there is one element lacking in the cross-cultural field, and that is the existence of adequate models to enable us to gain more insight into the processes going on inside people while they are thinking and communicating. We need to know more about how people think in different cultures ... (Hall, 1983, p. 91)

It is the purpose of this paper to develop and validate a model of the kind that Hall is calling for. I believe that the model developed here, which can be called the "cultural script model", offers a framework within which both the differences in the ways of communicating and the underlying differences in the way of thinking can be fruitfully and rigorously explored. The basic tenets of the paper can be stated as follows.

1. Ways of speaking characteristic of a given speech-community cannot be satisfactorily described (let alone explained) in purely behavioral terms; in fact, they constitute a behavioral manifestation of a tacit system of "cultural rules" or, as I call them, "cultural scripts"; to understand a society's ways of speaking, we have to identify and articulate its implicit "cultural scripts".
2. To be able to do this without ethnocentric bias we need a universal, language-independent perspective; this can be attained if the "rules" in question are stated in terms of lexical universals, that is, universal human concepts lexicalized in all languages of the world.

In this paper, I will try to show how cultural scripts can be stated and how they can be justified; and I will do so with particular reference to Japanese, (White) Anglo-American, and Black American cultural norms.

The cultural scripts proposed and illustrated in this paper can be compared to Shweder's (1984) "cultural frames"; or to Kitayama and Markus's (1992) "culturally shared ideas":

> First and most obvious, these ideas may become widely shared by a vast majority of the people in the society. This consensual nature of the core idea of a given culture results from the fact that everyday activities (including practices, customs, and social norms) constantly provide first-hand evidence for

> the core idea for a given society .... As a result, the core idea rarely receives much scepticism from the members of the society and, thus, most often serves as premises (rather than conclusions) in inference or argument. The core idea of the society tends to be taken for granted and, as a consequence, attains a quality as "zero-order belief" (Bem 1972), "cultural frame" (Holland & Quinn 1987), or "social representation" (Moscovici 1984). (Kitayama & Markus, 1992, p. 28-29)

But the cultural scripts advanced in the present paper are more specific than the "cultural frames" discussed by Kitayama and Markus (1992) or by the authors that they refer to. Above all, they are formulated in a highly constrained "natural semantic metalanguage", based on a small set of lexical universals and a small set of universal (or near-universal) syntactic patterns.[1] The use of this metalanguage allows us to portray and compare culture-specific attitudes, assumptions, and norms from a neutral, culture-independent point of view, and to do so in terms of simple formulae which are intuitively self-explanatory while at the same time being rigorous and empirically verifiable.

Speaking of "the cultural unconscious, those out-of-awareness cultural systems that have as yet to be made explicit" and of the tacit rules which "apply to the formative and active aspects of communication, discourses, ... transactions between people, and the action chains by which humans achieve their varied life goals", Hall stresses the need for a special notation, suitable for representing a society's tacit "cultural rules". He writes:

> Until notation systems apart from language are developed for culture, it is doubtful that the type of revolution occasioned by the development of writing and mathematics will occur. When this happens, however, there is no way of gauging the effect on human consciousness. Culture is therefore very closely related to if not synonymous with what has been defined as "mind". (Hall, 1976, p. 166)

I would not make as grand a claim for cultural scripts as Hall did for his yet-to-be-developed "culture notation"; I submit, however, that the natural semantic metalanguage based on lexical universals does constitute a language-independent "culture notation", suitable for representing the "cultural unconscious"; that the use of this metalanguage can clarify differences between cultures (including those most directly affecting communicative styles); and that, on a practical level, the metalanguage can facilitate cross-cultural communication.

In what follows, I will present three different illustrations of this approach, in three sections entitled "Apologizing in Japan", "To speak or not to speak: Japanese culture vs. Anglo-American culture", and "Advocates and spokesmen: American "black" and "white" cultural norms".

APOLOGIZING IN JAPAN

In the literature on Japanese culture and society, it is often said that in Japan it is impor-

tant to apologize very frequently and in a broad range of situations. The experience of Western students of Japanese is consistent with such statements. As Coulmas (1981:81), reports, "a Western student who has been taught Japanese experiences the extensive usage of apology expressions as a striking feature of everyday communication when he first comes to Japan. Correspondingly, "Among Japanese students of English, German, or other European languages, it is a common mistake to make apologies where no such acts are expected or anticipated in the respective speech community."

The Japanese psychiatrist Takeo Doi (1981:50) recalls in this connection an observation made by the Christian missionary Father Henvers about "the magical power of apology in Japan", and he comments: "It is particularly noteworthy that a Christian missionary, who came to Japan to preach forgiveness of sin, should have been so impressed by the realization that among Japanese a heartfelt apology leads easily to reconciliation." To illustrate this point, Doi recounts the experience of an American psychiatrist in Japan, who through some oversight in carrying out immigration formalities, "found himself hauled over the coals by an official of the Immigration Bureau. However often he explained that it was not really his fault, the official would not be appeased, until, at the end of his tether, he said "I'm sorry ..." as a prelude to a further argument, whereupon the official's expression suddenly changed and he dismissed the matter without further ado." Doi concludes his discussion with a characteristic comment that "people in the West (...) are generally speaking reluctant to apologize." (p. 51)

But observations such as those made by Coulmas and Doi, though revealing, are not specific enough to be truly effective in teaching culture. To begin with, the concept of "apology" itself is culture-bound and is therefore inappropriate as a descriptive and analytical tool in the cross-cultural field. The words *apology* and *apologize*, which are elements of the English set of speech act terms, include in their meaning the component 'I did something bad (to you)'. But as Doi's little ancedote illustrates, the so-called "Japanese apology" does not presuppose such a component. It is misleading and confusing, therefore, to call it "apology" in the first place.

Furthermore, those who talk of the extensive usage of apologies in Japan (as compared with the West) create an impression that the difference is quantitative, not qualitative. This is misleading and inaccurate: in fact, the difference lies not in the frequency of use of the same speech act, but in the use of qualitatively different speech acts (cf. Wierzbicka 1991a); and the use of these different speech acts is linked with qualitatively different cultural norms. Norms of this kind can be usefully illustrated with schematic scenarios, such as those offered in Kataoka's (1991) culture manual entitled "Japanese cultural encounters and how to handle them". One of these scenarios is entitled "Apology".

> Tom rented a car one weekend. It was his first time driving a car in Japan, but he had been an excellent driver in the United States.
>
> On his way to his friend's house, however, he had an accident. A young child about four years old ran into the street from an alley just asTom was driving by. Tom was driving under the speed limit and he was watching the road carefully so he stepped on the brakes immediately. However, the car did brush against the child, causing him to fall down. Tom immediately stopped the car and asked a passerby to call the police and an ambulance.

> Fortunately, the child's injuries were minor. The police did not give Tom a ticket, and he was told that he was not at fault at all, thanks to some witnesses' reports. He felt sorry for the child but decided that there was nothing more he could do, so he tried to forget about the accident. However, after several days, Tom heard from the policeman that the child's parents were extremely upset about Tom's response to the incident.

Kataoka invites the reader to consider four alternative answers to the question "Why were the child's parents upset?" The following answer is then indicated as the correct one: "They were angry because Tom did not apologize to them, nor did he visit the child at the hospital, even though he was not at fault. Tom should have done these things to show his sincerity." Kataoka comments further: "In Japan, one is expected to apologize and visit the victim of an accident, even if one is not at fault, to show his or her sincerity. In fact, one is expected to apologize whenever the other party involved suffers in any way, materially or emotionally. In many court cases, perpetrators get a lighter sentence when it is clear that they regret their actions, as reflected in their apology." (p. 64)

The cultural norm reflected in Kataoka's story and explanatory comments can be represented in the form of the following cultural script (written in lexical universals):

> if something bad happens to someone
> because I did something
> I have to say something like this to this person:
> "I feel something bad"

TO SPEAK OR NOT TO SPEAK: JAPANESE CULTURE VS. ANGLO-AMERICAN CULTURE.

Societies differ considerably in the value they place on silence and on nonverbal communication, as opposed to speech (cf. e.g., Basso 1970; Oliver 1971; Giles, Coupland, & Wiemann, 1992). In particular, Japan is often said to differ enormously in this respect from Anglo-American culture.

Befu (1971, p. 176) speaks in this connection of the "suppression of verbalism" in Japanese culture. He points to the Zen Buddhist emphasis on "the inutility of linguistic communication", and its emphatic rejection of verbal instruction; to the emphasis on nonverbal communication in mother-child interaction (with reference to the findings of Caudill & Weinstein, 1969), and to the nonverbal basis of pedagogical procedures in traditional arts and crafts in Japan. Doi (1981:33) notes that "the Western tradition is suffused with an emphasis on the importance of words. In Japan, such a tradition does not exist. I do not mean to suggest that traditional Japanese thought makes light of words, but it seems to be more conscious of matters that words do not reach."

What applies to Japanese philosophical and religious thought and to Japanese pedagogical tradition, applies also to everyday life. For example, Nakane describes Japanese in-group interaction as follows:

> Among fellow-members a single word would suffice for the whole sentence. The mutually sensitive response goes so far that each easily recognizes the other's slightest change in behaviour and mood and is ready to act accordingly. (1970, p. 121)

Commenting on this statement, Morsbach writes: "Such sensitivity is, of course, also discernible among group members of other cultures. The difference is a quantitative, not a qualitative one" (1992, p. 8).

But although differences in communication behavior can indeed often be described in quantitative terms, descriptions of this kind are superficial and not particularly illuminating. In fact, "quantitative" differences in communication behavior are often an external manifestation of "qualitative" differences in social cognition, and in people's psycho-cultural make-up. To understand cultures and societies we need to go beyond the "quantitative" differences visible on the surface of communication processes and to try to discover the underlying cultural scripts—discrete and distinct, and qualitatively different from one speech community to another.

For example, evidence provided in studies such as Fischer and Yoshida (1968) and in numerous other works on Japanese culture and society (e.g. Befu, 1971, 1974; Goldstein & Tamura, 1975; Lebra, 1974; Morsbach, 1988, Doi 1981) suggest the following cultural scripts referring to speech (among many others):

1. it is good not to say to other people all that I think
2. often it is good not to say anything to other people
3. when I want to say something to someone,
   it is good to think something like this before I say it:
   I can't say to other people all that I think
   something bad could happen because of this
4. if I say many things to people
   people may think something bad about me
   I may feel something bad because of this
5. when I want someone to know what I think/feel
   I don't have to say it to this person
   I can do something else
6. it is good if I can know what another person
   feels/thinks/wants
   this person doesn't have to say anything to me

Scripts of this kind are recognizable to all students of Japanese culture, even if they have never seen them stated in this form; and they capture, in a simple and concise form, generalizations alluded to in nearly all studies of the Japanese ethnography of communication. For example, Script 6 corresponds (in part) to the fundamental Japanese ideal of *omoiyari*, which Lebra defines as follows:

> *Omoiyari* refers to the ability and willingness to feel what others are feeling.

> to vicariously experience the pleasure or pain that they are undergoing, and to help them satisfy their wishes. (Lebra, 1974, p. 38)

Like other commentators, Lebra stresses the crucial importance for this empathetic understanding to occur without verbal communication (for detailed discussion, see Travis, 1992). For Lebra, the idea of *omoiyari* is so essential to Japanese culture that she doesn't hesitate to characterize the culture as a whole as an "omoiyari culture" (Lebra, 1974). The importance of this concept is also reflected in educational guidelines, where a key role is played by the slogan (Nakatsugawa, 1992)

> *Omoiyari no kokoro o taisetsuni shimashoo.*
> 'Let's treasure the mind/heart of omoiyari'.

It is also significant that in a reader's column in Japanese newspapers, where readers can place a photo of their child and state their wishes and expectations, one of the most common wishes is this (Nakatsugawa, 1992):

> *Omoiyari no aru hitoni nattene.*
> 'Please become a person who has omoiyari.'

Since the ideal of "omoiyari" is quite alien to Anglo-American culture, scripts such as 6 are clearly not included among the shared American norms and expectations.

On the other hand, implicit messages (cf. Kitayama & Markus, 1992) sent by Anglo-American culture to those immersed in it include the following ones, which are reflected in a wide variety of ethnographic data and which can be recognized by any student of American culture:

7. everyone can say something like this to other people:
   "I think this", "I don't think this"
8. it is good to say to someone what I think
9. it is good to say to someone what I feel

The first of these scripts reflects the cherished Anglo-American assumption that everyone has the right to express their opinions, the second one reflects the value placed on Anglo-American tradition on the free expression of opinions, and the third one, the cultural value of verbalization and an "open", "honest" expression of one's feelings (cf. Katriel & Philipsen 1981; Carbaugh, 1988).

None of the norms stated in the three scripts above (7, 8 and 9) is present in Japanese culture. On the contrary, evidence suggests that Japanese culture includes norms which are very different from, and in some cases diametrically opposed to, those stated in 7, 8 and 9, namely 10, 11 and 12:

10. I can't say something like this to other people:
    "I think this", "I don't think this"

11. it is good not to say to other people what I think
12. I can't say what I feel

(For detailed discussion, see Wierzbicka, 1991b.)

Cultural norms such as 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 are quite general in nature, and they all require further specifications, provisos, and supplementary statements, which cannot be discussed here for reasons of space. But the contrast in the cultural emphasis is very striking: The popular American assertiveness training has the goal "to teach people to express their thoughts and feelings explicitly in words, rather than relying upon indirect or nonverbal messages" (Clancy, 1986, p. 217), whereas the Japanese "empathy training" (*omoiyari* training) teaches interactants to anticipate and understand each other's feelings, wishes, and needs without verbal communication.

Although limitations of space preclude further discussion of this topic in the present paper, it is important to note that "distrust of words" and appreciation of silence may take different forms in different cultures and that the simple dichotomy "to speak or not to speak" is not a sufficient basis for cultural typology. For example, Anglo Australian culture, in contrast to Anglo American culture, can also be said to be characterized by a distrust of words. But the specific cultural norms underlying the Australian and the Japanese "distrust of words" are very different. In particular, Australian culture hasn't created anything like the concept of 'omoiyari' and the ideal of wordless empathy is quite alien to it. In Australia, the key cultural ideal is that of "mateship", which presupposes mutual good feelings, mutual support and unconditional loyalty based on shared experience (without any implications of fine tuning to each other's psychological states). The prototypical "mates" are expected to neither bare their hearts to one another through talk nor to understand each other's hearts through non-verbal empathy; but they are expected to stick together, to do things together, and to rely on one another for company and support.

The anti-intellectualism of traditional Australian culture is linked with a contempt and disparaging attitude towards articulated speech, towards social, intellectual, and verbal graces, towards words and ideas as opposed to practical action. As pointed out by the author of the classic study "Australian English" Sidney Baker (1959:51),

> ...in Australia "the phlegmatic understatement will almost always command greater attention than over-statement, terseness more than volubility, the short vulgar word more than the polite polysyllable".

The well-known social critic Donald Horne (1964:4) makes a similar point somewhat more forcefully when he says that

> In the view of the ordinary Australian, "most of what is pumped out of the word factories is 'bullshit'".

The word *bullshit* used by Horne to epitomise Australian attitudes to "what is pumped out of the word factories" is well chosen since it is one of the key words in Australian English, with a uniquely Australian semantic profile and with a very high frequency of use (cf. Wierzbicka, 1992a). Nothing could illustrate the difference between the Australian distrust of words and the Japanese one better than the contrast between these two key cultural concepts: *bullshit* and *omoiyari*. (For another, again very different, example of a culture characterized by a distrust of words see Basso 1970).

"ADVOCATES" AND "SPOKESMEN": AMERICAN "BLACK" AND "WHITE" CULTURAL NORMS.

It goes without saying that different social, and ethnic, groups can share the same language (as a basic lexico-grammatical code) and yet operate in terms of different cultural norms and different cultural scripts. For example, black Americans are well-known to share norms different from those shared by main-stream white Americans (cf. e.g. Abrahams, 1976; Kochman, 1981; Kochman (Ed.), 1972; Labov, 1972; Mitchell-Kernan, 1971; Goodwin 1990; Folb 1980). Some of these differences were described with particular clarity and insight in Kochman's (1981) book entitled *Black and White Styles in Conflict*. For example, Kochman writes:

> The modes of behavior that blacks and whites consider appropriate for engaging in public debate on an issue differ in their stance and level of spiritual intensity. The black mode—that of black community people—is high-keyed: animated, interpersonal, and confrontational. The white mode—that of middle class—is relatively low-keyed: dispassionate, impersonal, and non-challenging. The first is characteristic of involvement; it is heated, loud, and generates affect. The second is characteristic of detachment and is cool, quiet, and without affect. (p. 18)

Clearly, one key issue involved in these different communicative modes is that of attitudes to emotion, which white speakers tend to view negatively, as incompatible with clear thinking and rational argumentation, and which black speakers view positively, as a "natural" and positive force, a sign of sincerity and commitment.

As a first approximation, we can try to reflect these contrasting attitudes to emotion in the following scripts:

White

13. when I say something like this to someone:
"I think this", "I don't think this",
I don't want this person to think that I feel something because of this
[if people think that I feel something when I say something,
they will think that I can't think well]

Black

14. when I want to say something like this to someone:
"I think this, I don't think this",
I want this person to know that I feel something because of this
[if people think that I don't feel something when I say something,
they can think that I don't think what I say]

As Kochman points out, whites value "dispassionate speech", because they view emotion and reason as antithetical:

> Whites ... regard the black argumentative mode as dysfunctional because of their view that reason and emotion work against each other.... This explains why discussion, the white mode for testing and validating ideas, is devoid of affect and why its presence, to whites, automatically renders any presentation less persuasive to the extent that affect is also present. (p. 19)

By contrast, blacks view "dispassionate speech" as "unnatural" and suspicious. They

> misinterpret (and distrust) the dispassionate and detached mode that whites use to engage in debate. It resembles the mode that blacks themselves use when they are *fronting*: that is, consciously suppressing what they truly feel or believe. As one black student put it, "That's when I'm lyin'." (p. 22)

The black concept of 'fronting' is a good example of the unique linguistic features which develop within the speech of a community and which reflect this community's cultural values. The fact that blacks and whites in America share the same basic linguistic code (English) does not detract from the idea that blacks and whites have (partly) different cultural norms and that cultural norms are reflected in ways of speaking. Rather, the shared linguistic code reflects some norms which are common to blacks and whites in America, whereas the well-documented differences in black and white ways of speaking (including the concept of 'fronting') reflect cultural differences. Both the shared norms and the differing norms can be accurately portrayed in cultural scripts.

The preference for "animated", emotional speech goes hand in hand in black culture with other norms such as the preference for what Kochman calls "dynamic opposition", "passionate involvement", disdain for "neutral objectivity", passionate "caring" for one's position, and a desire to struggle for it. One way of generalizing over the differences between the "white" and "black" style is found in Kochman's ingenious formula contrasting "advocates" with "spokesmen":

> Blacks present their views as advocates. They take a position and show that they care about this position.... Present-day whites relate to their material as spokesmen, not advocates.... How deeply a person cares about or believes in the idea is considered irrelevant to its fundamental value.... Whites believe that caring about one's own ideas ... will make them less receptive to oppos-

> ing ideas.... Thus they are taught to present their ideas as though the ideas had an objective life, existing independent of any person expressing them. This accounts for the impersonal mode of expression that whites use, which, along with the absence of affect and dynamic opposition, establishes the detached character of proceedings in which white cultural norms dominate. (p. 21)

The Anglo "non-advocate" stance can be portrayed in the form of the following script (among others):

15. if I say something like this to someone: "I think this",
    I can't say something like this at the same time:
        "I want you to think the same"
        "it is good to think this"

By contrast, for Black English the following "advocate" script can be posited:

16. when I want to say something like this to someone: "I think this",
    I want to say something like this at the same time:
        "I want you to think the same"
        "it is good to think this"

The cherished Anglo "open-mindedness" (cf. e.g. Bruner 1990, p. 30) can be represented as follows:

17. if I want to say something like this to someone: "I think this",
    it is good to say something like this at the same time:
        "I don't want to say that I will always think this"
        "I don't have to think this"
        "if at some time after now I think that it is good to think
            something else, I will think something else"

This "open-mindedness" is closely related to what Kochman calls the "spokesman" stance. I would represent this stance as follows:

18. I think this: ...
    I want to say why I think this
    I want to say why one may think that it is good to think this
    (I don't want to say that everyone has to think this)

Kochman's assertion that white Anglo culture values an "impersonal" mode of expression may seem to contradict the observation made earlier in connection with Benjamin Franklin's professed preference for a first-person ("I think") mode of speaking. I believe, however, that the contradiction is more apparent than real, and that the source of the difficulty lies in the use of vague and undefined notions such as "personal" and "impersonal". Compare, for example,

the following two utterances:

A. This is absolutely wrong.
B. I don't think so.

Which of these two is more "personal", and which more "impersonal"? Clearly, it is impossible to answer such a question without first clarifying its meaning. Utterance B refers explicitly to "I", so in that sense it is more "personal". At the same time, however, utterance B leaves more room for dissent than utterance A, and there is certainly more "dynamic opposition" and "affect" in A than in B.

It is not that it is particularly helpful, therefore, to label the prevailing Anglo mode as "impersonal". The differences in question can be better clarified in terms of explicit scripts, along the lines of 'I want you to think the same' (black), and 'you don't have to think the same' (white), 'one can't think this', 'it is bad to think this' (black), and 'I don't think this', 'you can think what you want to', 'we don't have to think the same' (white). Often, scripts of this kind find an echo in recorded folk comments, such as the comment about white style attributed by Kochman to one of his black students, Joan McCarty: "You'll stay your way, and I'll stay mine" (Kochman, 1981, p. 20). Roughly:

19. when I want to say something like this to someone: "I think this",
I can't say something like this to this person:
"I want you to think the same"
"it is good to think this"
it is good to say something like this to this person:
"I know that you may not think the same"
"I will not feel anything bad because of this"

20. when someone says to me something like this: "I think this",
I can't say something like this to this person:
"I don't want you to think this"
"it is bad to think this"
I can say something like this: "I don't think the same"
I think that you will not feel anything bad because of this

CULTURAL SCRIPTS ARTICULATED AS EXPLICIT CULTURAL MESSAGES

In a sense, cultural scripts belong to the cultural unconscious, (Hall 1976:162), and must be discovered by analyzing what people do. As Bruner (1990, p. 17) points out, the crucial question is: "How does what one *does* reveal what one thinks or feels or believes?" I believe, however, that Bruner is also right in stressing the crucial importance of what people *say*: "A culturally sensitive psychology ... is and must be based not only upon what people actually *do*, but what they *say* they do" (p. 16).

It is important to note, therefore, that while cultural scripts can be seen as hypotheses

about what people think based on the observation of what they *do* (e.g. how they communicate and interact), they can also be seen as statements encapsulating, in a standardized form, things that people frequently *say* they think and do. In particular, cultural scripts can be part of the common lore, codified in common sayings, in proverbs, in set phrases, in clichés, in what are perceived as truisms, in famous quotes, in everyday rhetoric, in common socialization routines, and so on. In the case of modern Anglo-American culture, cultural scripts are often encoded (in a more or less complex form) in the manuals and guidebooks of the popular "self-help" literature.

An excellent example of a common socialization strategy formulated almost like a cultural script is provided by Cook's (1990, p. 384) data on the use of the Japanese particle *no*: In the following example, child C does not want to eat *sashimi* 'raw fish'. The mother, using *no*, tells her not to express likes and dislikes (when she eats).

Child C (age: 3): *Osashimi iya da! Osashimi iya!*
'(I) don't want *sashimi*! (I) don't want *sashimi*!'
Mother: *Are kore suki kirai iwanai no.*
'(We) don't say that (we) like or dislike this or that.'

The mother's suggested script reads:

21. [everyone knows:]
one can't say something like this: "I like this, I don't like this",
"I want this, I don't want this"

The component 'everyone knows' (Cook says "common knowledge") represents the semantic contribution of the particular *no*. (For further examples of common socialization strategies as embodiments of "cultural scripts", see Kitayama & Markus 1992; Shweder 1984).

I will refer to a highly representative and very popular "assertion manual" by Alberti and Emmon (1975): *Stand Up, Speak Out, Talk Back! The Key to Self-Assertive Behavior*. Characterizing the desirable "assertive style" and contrasting it with the "nonassertive" and "aggressive" styles, the authors encourage the readers to "openly express [their] personal feelings and opinions" (p. 24), and at the same time not to be "openly critical of others' ideas, opinions, behavior". Clearly, these two injunctions can be translated into the following scripts:

22. it is good to say to other people what I think
23. it is good to say to other people what I feel
24. I can't say something like this to someone:
"it is bad to think/do what you think/do"

As Kyoko Nakatsugawa (1992) points out, a Japanese cultural equivalent of this book would be likely to have a very different title and a very different overall emphasis: *Sit Down! Listen To! Talk With!*. The cultural norms alluded to by such a title would include the following ones:

25. it is not good to say to other people what I think
26. it is not good to say to other people what I feel
27. it is good to know what the other person thinks
28. it is good to know what the other person feels
29. when someone says something to me,
    it is good to say something like this to this person:
        "I would say the same"

As my second example from "self help" literature, let me quote some "basic rules" put forward in Dale Carnegie's (1981) famous and extremely influential bestseller *How to Win Friends and Influence People*:

Principle 1 The only way to get the best of an argument is to avoid it.
Principle 2 Show respect for the other person's opinions. Never say,
"You're wrong."

It is interesting to note that while the book urges the reader to avoid arguments as one "would avoid rattlesnakes and earthquakes" (p. 116), at the same time it teaches one to "welcome the disagreement" (p. 120). But "welcoming disagreement" does not mean "maximizing disagreement". On the contrary, the reader is urged to "try to build bridges of understanding", to "look for areas of agreement", to "promise to think over [one's] opponent's ideas and study them carefully" (p. 121). Advice of this kind is very transparently related to the Anglo-American cultural scripts stated earlier.

The injunction to "welcome disagreement" corresponds to the norm 'everyone can say: I don't think the same', whereas that of "looking for areas of agreement" echoes the rule 'it is good to say that I think the same about part of this' (see Wierzbicka, In press). The advice to show respect for the other person's opinions and to promise to study the opponent's ideas suggests the following further script:

30. it is good to say something like this to people :
    "I want to know what you think"
    "when you say what you think, I want to think about it"

The strong warning against "arguments" (in contrast to disagreement) reflects scripts which prohibit telling other people that what they think is "bad" and openly trying to get them to think the same as we do. At the same time, the emphasis on freedom of opinion and freedom of disagreement is combined with pragmatic considerations: by showing respect for other people's opinions we can actually draw our opponents closer to us, whereas by contradicting them directly and making it plain that we want to get them to change their mind we can only drive them further away.

All these principles of successful communication Anglo-American style are reflected in an illuminating way in classical documents of American literature such as Benjamin Franklin's autobiography, quoted by Carnegie. To wit:

> I made it a rule to forbear all direct contradiction to the sentiment of others, and all positive assertions of my own. I even forbade myself the use of every word or expression in the language that imported a fix'd opinion, such as 'certainly', 'undoubtedly', etc., and I adopted, instead of them, 'I conceive', 'I apprehend', or 'I imagine' a thing to be so or so, or 'it so appears to me at present.' When another asserted something that I thought an error, I deny'd myself the pleasure of contradicting him abruptly, and of showing immediately some absurdity in his proposition: and in answering I began by observing that in certain cases or circumstances his opinion would be right, but in the present case there appear'd or seem'd to me some difference, etc. I soon found the advantage of this change in my manner, the conversations I engag'd in went on more pleasantly The modest way in which I propos'd my opinions procur'd them a readier reception and less contradiction; I had less mortification when I was found to be in the wrong, and I more easily prevail'd with others to give up their mistakes and join with me when I happened to be in the right. (quoted in Carnegie, 1981, p. 129-130)

In this remarkable passage Franklin makes a number of extremely insightful linguistic observations and offers a number of highly pertinent cultural scripts. Franklin's remarks on avoiding all positive assertion of his own thoughts may seem less apposite, given well-known Anglo-American emphasis on "self-assertion", and on clear, uninhibited expression of one's opinion (cf. e.g. Alberti & Emmon, 1975; Smith, 1975; Baer, 1976). But in fact, Franklin is using the word "assertion" in a sense different from the current one. Clearly, he didn't mean to say that it is bad to *express* one's opinion, but only that it is bad to attempt to *impose* them on other people by expressing them in a dogmatic and hectoring manner. The contrast that he is setting up is that between an 'I think X' mode of expression on the one hand and an 'everyone has to think X' and other similar modes on the other. He suggests, in effect, something like the following scripts:

31. it is good to say something like this: "I think this"
    I can't say something like this: "everyone has to think this"

With respect to other people's opinions, Franklin's rules can be stated as follows:

32. if someone says something like this to me: "I think this",
    I can't say something like this to this person:
        "it is bad to think this"

As my last illustration, I will use Donal Carbaugh's (1988) analysis of the common cultural assumptions evident in the extremely popular American television talk show, "Donahue". According to Carbaugh, the most salient of these assumptions is that concerning the individual's rights to their own opinions:

> This general point, on the individual's right to state any opinion, to act freely, has many particular expressions. Donahue asked a woman audience member to react to a group of feminist guests: "How do you feel about these women?" Her

> response was: "Each woman has their own opinion and if that is what they believe in, fine." The tone of her utterance indicated an implicit disagreement, but she stated explicitly the cultural premise: Everyone has the right to say and do what they want. (p. 29)

Rewritten as a cultural script, this premise reads:

33. everyone can say something like this:
"I think this, I don't think this"

Furthermore, an "assumed cultural premise aired on 'Donahue' [is] that the individual has something to say and should indeed say it" (p. 38). This means:

34. it is good to say something like this: "I think this, I don't think this"

However, as Carbaugh points out, "an important qualification must be added here: there are limits to an individual's rights to speak.... when stating a position or opinion, one should speak only for oneself and not impose one's opinions on others" (p. 30). Rephrased as a cultural script, this proviso would read:

35. I can't say something like this to someone:
"you have to think this"
"you can't think this"

Another norm clearly transpiring from the Donahue discourse is that of "respect" for other people's opinions, and of "non-judgmental" speech. The common theme is:

> Individuals have the right to speak their opinions, a right which should be respected, and one way of speaking respectfully to others is by being nonjudgmental of them and their opinions. (p. 36)

As Carbaugh points out, this emphasis on tolerance for a variety of opinions is displayed in a variety of recurring prefatory comments, such as "That's my opinion. You are entitled to yours" (p. 36); "I'm not going to argue with anyone's morals"; "If that's what you believe, fine"; "you have a right to your feeling" (p. 37); or "no one is going to deny you your position" (p. 31).

The corresponding script can be stated as follows:

36. I can't say something like this
"you think something bad"
"you can't think this"

I must stress that explicit cultural messages embodied in proverbs, common sayings, famous quotes or self-help literature, which can at times be self-contradictory, cannot be re-

garded as conclusive evidence for cultural norms (cf. Hołówka, 1986) and are not proposed here as such. They do, however, provide telling illustrations of the "messages" that a culture sends to those immersed in it. The problem of evidence for the cultural norms represented in "cultural scripts" will be discussed in the following section.

LINGUISTIC EVIDENCE FOR CULTURAL NORMS

Cultural scripts are not statements about people's behaviour, they are statements about "ideas" - expectations, thoughts, assumptions, norms. These ideas are not necessarily conscious, although they do surface from time to time in explicit messages. By and large, however, they are tacit. But how can one study tacit ideas and how can one verify their reality?

In mid-nineties the problem should no longer seem as intractable to social scientists as it did in the hey-day of behaviourism.

In a 1981 discussion on culture theory D'Andrade described the transition from the behaviourist to the cognitivist era as follows:

> When I was a graduate student, one imagined people *in* a culture: ten years later culture was all in their heads. (...) Culture became a branch of cognitive psychology. We went from "let's try to look at behavior and describe it", to "let's look at ideas". Now, how you were going to look at ideas was a bit of a problem - and some people said, "Well, look at language." (Shweder 1984:7, quoted in Harkness 1992:112)

Indeed, when it comes to the study of (collective) ideas there is no richer and more reliable source of evidence than language. Cultural scripts are no exception in this regard.

In particular, one extremely rich source of evidence for cultural scripts lies in a culture's "key words", that is, frequently used lexical items encapsulating core cultural concepts. For example, in Japanese culture certain key cultural concepts regulating human interaction are encapsulated in key words such as *amae*, *enryo*, *wa* or *on*, words which have no equivalents in English but whose meaning can be portrayed accurately in English (or in any other language) in terms of lexical universals such as 'want', 'know' or 'think'. (For detailed semantic analysis of these key Japanese words see Wierzbicka 1991b and 1991a). For example, the key concept of *enryo* can be explicated (roughly) as follows:

> I can't say something like this to other people:
> "I think this, I don't think this"
> "I want this, I don't want this"
> someone could feel something bad because of this

The key Japanese word *enryo* reflects and validates cultural scripts such as:

> I can't say something like this to other people:
> "I think this, I don't think this"

I can't say something like this to other people:
"I want this, I don't want this"
I can't say something like this to other people:
"I want you to say what you want"

and so on.

Often, crucial linguistic evidence for cultural norms comes from the area of speech act verbs. For example, Australian English includes (or has for a long time included) the following language-specific speech act verbs epitomizing core cultural values and cultural norms: *whinge*, *dob in*, *chyack*, *yarn* and *shout*. (For detailed semantic analysis, see Wierzbicka 1991a). For example, *whinge* - a derogatory word for something like persistent and helpless complaining - celebrates the Australian values of 'toughness' and 'resilience' and provides partial evidence for the following cultural script:

when I feel something bad
because something bad is happening to me
I can't say something like this to other people:
"something bad is happening to me"
"I feel something bad because of this"
"I want someone to do something because of this"
people would think something bad about me because of this

The word *whinge* plays a crucial role in the socialization of children in Australia (where "Stop whingeing!" is one of the most powerful devices in parental transmission of the national ethos), as do untranslatable words such as *enryo*, *wa*, *on*, *giri*, *amae* or *omoiyari* in the socialization of children in Japan.

Among the wide range of linguistic devices implementing cultural norms a particularly important role is played by "illocutionary particles" and other "discourse connectives" such as the English particle *well*, the Japanese particle *ne*, or the Polish particles *ależ*, *skądże* or *przecież*.

For example, the English particle *well*, which plays a vital role in English discourse, is often used to mitigate disagreements and to seek partial agreement while leaving room for an open expression of differing opinions. Utterances such as "Well, yes" or "Well, no" cannot be translated into Polish, because Polish has no "mitigating" particle like *well* (and no cultural norms calling for such mitigation). On the other hand, Polish conversational terms such as "Ależ skądże!" cannot be translated into English, because English has no "confrontational" particles of this kind (and no cultural norms encouraging unmitigated confrontation). (Cf. Wierzbicka, In press; Hoffman 1989).

Equally revealing is the ubiquitous Japanese particle *no* (cf. Cook 1990; Wierzbicka 1987; Wierzbicka, In press), whose meaning can be represented by means of the following paraphrase: 'I would say the same'. The constant presence of this particle in Japanese conversation both echoes and validates the following cultural script:

when someone says something to me
it is good to say something like this to this person:
"I would say the same"

The examples adduced above are meant to provide no more than an illustration of the claim that languages provide important evidence for cultural scripts. Limitations of space prevent further discussion of this evidence in this paper. But the examples mentioned here should be sufficient to give the reader an idea of how linguistic data can be used to elucidate cultural norms and validate cultural scripts.

CONCLUSION

Although in most societies there is a great deal of variation in people's communicative styles, there is also a considerable level of intra-societal similarity. Even more striking than the similarity in actual behavior, however, is the similarity in expectations reflected in a wide range of ethnographic and linguistic data (cf. Gudykunst and Kim's (1984) "normative patterns"). Evidence of the kind discussed in this paper suggests that every society has a shared set of (subconscious) cultural norms, norms which are quite specific and which can be stated in the form of explicit cultural scripts.

Cultural scripts are above all concerned with things that one can or cannot say, things that one can or cannot do, and also things that "it is good" to say or do. They constitute a society's unspoken "cultural grammar" (whose parts can surface, at times, in open discourse, in the form of proverbs, common sayings, popular wisdom, common socialization routines, and so on).

Despite the dynamic expansion of cross-cultural communication studies in recent years, many leading figures in the field continue to point to a need for further search for innovative and rigorous frameworks for intercultural work (cf. e.g. Giles & Franklyn-Stokes, 1989; Gudykunst & Gumbs, 1989; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989). The theory of cultural scripts provides, it is hoped, such an innovative and rigorous framework.

Using this framework, we can model cultural attitudes much more accurately and at the same time much more clearly than it can be done using binary labels such as "direct/indirect", "confrontational/non confrontational", "assertive/non assertive", and so on, which have no well-defined content and which often lead to confusion and contradiction in the description of communication patterns across a wide range of cultures (cf. Wierzbicka, 1991a).[2] Furthermore, the use of unique and yet comparable cultural scripts allows us to develop a typology of communication patterns which does not necessitate trying to fit cultures into the straitjackets of binary categories such as "collectivist/individualist" or "high-context/low context" (cf. Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1983).

It could be argued that the scripts with components such as 'I can say X' and 'I can't say X' are also binary in nature. But in fact scripts are flexible and free of any a priori constraints; since each script is a unique configuration of components the use of the component 'I can say X' in one script does not force us to use its opposite ('I can't say X') in another. Binary oppositions between scripts along the lines of 'I can say X' vs. 'I can't say X' are possible and can be used whenever appropriate but they are not forced by the analytical framework itself.

As James Down pointed out, "one of the greatest stumbling blocks to understanding other peoples within or without a particular culture is the tendency to judge others' behavior by our own standards" (quoted in Gudykunst & Kim, 1984, p.83). One of the most important steps towards overcoming this stumbling block is to make the different standards of behavior associated with different cultures explicit. For intercultural communication, it is essential that different cultural norms operating in different societies be explicitly formulated, that they be formulated in a way which makes it easy to compare them, but also that they be formulated in an unbiased way, without distortions deriving from rigid a priori frameworks. It is also essential that they be formulated in a non technical and generally accessible language.

Since cultural scripts can be formulated in lexical universals, they can be easily compared across cultures. What is more, comparison of cultures based on cultural scripts can be undertaken from a language-independent and a culture-neutral point of view, and can be free of any ethnocentric bias. The fact that cultural scripts are directly translatable from one language to another and that they can be accessed, so to speak, via any language whatsoever, ensures their universal and culture-independent character. Natural semantic metalanguage provides us with a universal system of notation for stating and comparing tacit cultural rules in terms of which different societies operate and in terms of which we can understand and make sense of differential communicative behavior.

NOTES

[1] The "natural semantic metalanguage" used in the present paper (and in the author's other works such as Wierzbicka, 1987, 1988, 1991a, 1991b and 1992a) is the outcome of an extensive empirical study of a wide range of languages, undertaken over two decades by the author and colleagues. On the basis of this search a set of lexical universals has been tentatively identified (see Goddard & Wierzbicka (Eds.), forthcoming; Wierzbicka, 1992b), and a universal metalanguage has been developed. Since this lexicographic metalanguage is carved out of natural language and can be understood directly via natural language, it has been called the "natural semantic metalanguage" (NSM). The latest version of the lexicon of this metalanguage, arrived at by trial and error on the basis of two decades of cross-linguistic lexicographic research, includes the following elements:

[substantives] I, you, someone, something, people
[determiners, quantifiers] this, the same, other, one, two, many (much), all
[mental predicates] know, want, think, feel, say
[actions, events] do, happen
[evaluative] good, bad
[descriptors] big, small
[intensifier] very
[meta-predicates] can, if, because, no (negation), like (how)
[time and place] when, where, after (before), under (above)
[taxonomy, partonymy] kind of, part of

These elements have their own, language-independent syntax. For example, the verb-like elements 'think', 'know', 'say', 'feel' and 'want' combine with "nominal" personal elements 'I', 'you', and 'someone', and take complex, proposition-like complements (such as 'I think: you did something bad'). (For fuller discussion, see Wierzbicka, 1991c.)

[2] Robinson and Giles (1990, p. 4) remind social scientists "to be open-minded and careful in the application of models derived in one culture when attempting to export them to others. What will prove to be universal to the species will be determined by evidence yet to be collected and theories yet to be created." In contrast to many other currently used models, the model presented in this paper is not derived from one culture and one language, but is based on a great deal of cross-linguistic evidence which has been collected over several years by a number of scholars (cf. Goddard & Wierzbicka (Eds.), forthcoming). The theory of cultural scripts is based on the empirical findings concerning conceptual universals—that is, linguistically embodied concepts which are indeed "universal to the species".

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